DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 310 394 CS 212 026

AUTHOR Coward, John M.
TITLE Indians and Public Opinion in the Age of Reform: The Case of the Poncas.
PUB DATE 10 Aug 89
NOTE 39p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (72nd, Washington, DC, August 10-13, 1989).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Historical Materials (060)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *American Indians; Journalism History; Land Acquisition; Media Research; *Newspapers; News Writing; *Publicity; *Public Opinion; United States History
IDENTIFIERS Dawes Allotment Act 1887; Nineteenth Century History; Oklahoma; *Ponca (Tribe); Reform Efforts

ABSTRACT

News and editorial coverage of the Ponca controversy of 1879 was investigated in an effort to discover why and how this particular Indian story became a national crusade. The Ponca campaign helped promote reform-minded legislation which conferred new rights on the Indians and promised to speed their assimilation into mainstream society. The Dawes Act, which granted individual Indians tracts of land, was the culmination of the nineteenth century Indian reform movement. With publicity-minded reformers leading the way, the newspapers played a major part of the Ponca campaign and became promoters of the Indian reform movement. Without sympathetic news coverage and supporting editorials, in fact, opposition to Ponca removal and support for Indian reform could not have attained the level of public attention that it did. Since the Poncas were peaceful people and had been clearly wronged by the Indian Bureau, it did not take much editorial courage to support their tribe. Press coverage of the Ponca affair was less the result of journalistic enterprise than of the activists on both sides. The newspapers never covered the story until after it had been promoted and then carried the story only through the lecture tour which had been arranged. Because the press was dependent on various partisans for its information, many issues of the Indian reform movement were never discussed or critically examined. By failing to investigate the story fully, the papers contributed to the superficial nature of the Indian debate. (Seventy-two notes are included.) (MG)

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# Indians and Public Opinion in the Age of Reform: The Case of the Poncas

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Paper presented to the Public Relations Division of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication at the AEJMC annual convention, Washington, D.C., August 10, 1989.

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# Indians and Public Opinion in the Age of Reform: The Case of the Poncas

In the early morning hours of March 30, 1879, Gen. George Crook came to the newsroom of the Omaha *Daily Herald* in search of a reform-minded editor named Thomas H. Tibbles. Crook told the 38-year-old assistant editor that he was troubled by an order to return 30 Ponca Indians from Fort Omaha to Indian Territory. The order was, the general declared, as cruel a thing as he had ever been forced to do, punishment for a desperate and sickly band of peaceful Indians who had been forced from their homelands on the Niobrara River, near the Nebraska-South Dakota border. "I would resign my commission, if that would prevent the order from being executed--but it would not," Crook admitted. "It's no use for me to protest. Washington always orders the very opposite of what I recommend." In Tibbles and the *Herald*, however, the general saw a possible solution. "You have a great daily newspaper here which you can use," Crook told Tibbles. "I ask you to go into this fight against those who are robbing these helpless people," Crook continued. "The American people, if they knew half the truth, would send every member of the Indian Ring to prison."[1]

At seven that same morning, Tibbles walked four miles to the fort to interview the Poncas. At first, Standing Bear, leader of the Poncas, would not talk, fearing publicity would anger Gen. Crook. But Tibbles had considerable experience with Plains Indians and had even been inducted into a secret tribal society. When he revealed the secret signs to the chief, Standing Bear convened a council and the Ponca chiefs began to tell their sad tale to the Omaha *Herald*.[2]

News of the Ponca arrests soon reached the papers in Chicago, New York and Boston, where, as Gen. Crook had predicted, it found a receptive

audience. Indian sympathizers, still recovering from the public uproar over the Custer disaster, saw the peaceful Poncas as an ideal vehicle for resuscitating their movement. Aided by editors like Tibbles and pressed on by reformers like Episcopalian Bishop Henry Whipple and writer Helen Hunt Jackson, the Ponca controversy soon became a *cause celebre* in American public life.

The Ponca affair marked the beginning of a shift in public opinion toward better treatment of the Indians and against the government's Indian policies. By 1880, the Interior Secretary Carl Schurz was on the defensive and Standing Bear and a beguiling Indian woman named Bright Eyes were celebrities on the Eastern lecture circuit. The publication of Helen Hunt Jackson's *A Century of Dishonor* in 1881 further cemented the gains of the reformers and promoted the passage of the Dawes Severalty Act of 1887, a reform bill which promised land as well as U. S. citizenship to individual Indians. Little more than a decade after the tragedy on the Little Big Horn, Indian reformers looked forward to a new, enlightened era of Indian-white relations in the United States.

Although the Ponca publicity campaign predates the establishment of twentieth century public relations techniques, the campaign represents one of many nineteenth century public relations efforts designed to mobilize public opinion and generate social change in America. The public relations efforts of Tibbles and the other Indian reformers were often haphazard and sometimes counter-productive. Nevertheless, the Indian reformers realized that favorable newspaper publicity and staged events would help the Ponca cause. As a result, they used a variety of techniques--newspaper stories, editorials, letters to the editor, Washington lobbying,

and costumed Indian speakers--to make their case in a forceful and dramatic way.

This paper examines the publicity campaign mounted on behalf of the Poncas in the late 1870s and early 1880s. More specifically, this study investigates news and editorial coverage of the Ponca controversy in an effort to discover why and how this particular Indian story became a national crusade. Ultimately, the purpose of the paper is to illuminate the social and cultural forces at work in and on the press as it attempted to make sense of Indians and Indian policies in a time of changing public attitudes.

**Indians and Public Opinion in the 1870s**

The newspapers of the 1870s found Indian news all across the American West. The Modoc War of 1873 was a typical example how Indians made news. When a Modoc chief known as Captain Jack betrayed a peace delegation and killed an army general and a Methodist minister, the nation--and the press-- was outraged. The Saint Paul *Daily Press* summed up the national mood: "The feeling of indignation against the Modoc murderers, as attested by conversations with all the leading officials in Washington, reaches a degree of intensity which no Indian treachery has ever heretofore created."[3]

The Sioux made even larger and more hostile headlines, especially after the Battle of the Little Big Horn in 1876.[4] Later in the decade, the Cheyennes and the Utes were at war--and in the papers. As might be expected, Western papers were frequently alarmed about Indian violence and contemptuous of Eastern humanitarians. Said the editor of the Montana

*Post*, "It is high time the sickly sentimentalism about humane treatment and conciliatory measures should be consigned to novel writers, and if the Indians continue their barbarities, wipe them out."[5] Concerning the Utes, the *Rocky Mountain News* was single-minded: "That the North American Indians are hopeless savages is the most clearly established fact in the history of man."[6]

Eastern papers, too, could find reasons to distrust the Indians. In the late 1870s, Washington *Post* ran headlines which referred to "Discontented Indians," "Redskin Murderers," "Cunning Chiefs" and the like.[7] The hostilities between whites and Utes in 1877 also received unsympathetic coverage in the *Post*. The notorious Meeker massacre, for example, in which Ute warriors had killed Indian agent Nathan Meeker and a number of other persons, led to a series of *Post* reports on the Indian troubles in Colorado. When several Utes came before an investigating board, the *Post* headline did not pretend to be neutral: "SWEARING THE INDIANS/They Perjure Themselves Just the Same as White Men." The story, however, cited no specific perjury, though it openly challenged the testimony of a Ute named Ben Johnson:

> To the question, 'Do you know whether there has been any fight at the White river?' he answered, 'No.' None of his relatives were in the fight so far as he knew, and he could not give the name of a single Indian engaged in killing Meeker and the employee, nor the troops.[8]

Two days later, the *Post* published another Ute story which questioned the tribe's complaints against an Indian commissioner. "The fact is, that Gen. Adams, by his firmness and lawyer-like aptness, is ferreting out the

lies of the Indians, and had caused them to fear his presence," the *Post* said.[9] Such comments were not those of a sympathetic Eastern press.

Yet attitudes toward the Western tribes were moderating during these years. Indeed, as historian Frederick Hoxie has noted, many newspapers, both East and West, approached Indians with an a new sense of fairness. Even the Meeker tragedy prompted some editorial support for the Indians, Hoxie discovered. "Massacred by Utes," was the initial headline in the Chicago *Tribune*, but two days later the paper took an less sensational approach. "There are two sides to every question, even an Indian question," the *Tribune's* editorial noted.[10] Even some Western papers recognized that the Ute outbreak had roots in unfair government policies and mistreatment of the tribe. "One thing is certain," said the *Alta California* in the wake of the Meeker tragedy, "and that is that our whole Indian policy is a miserable one and a failure."[11] In short, the newspapers were gradually coming to a more complex view of Indians: they could still be "savage," but this idea was fading in the face of new evidence that the natives could be civilized--at least some of them could. By the late 1870s, the "civilized savage" was turning up in the press with increasing frequency.

**The Press and the Poncas**

The Ponca controversy began with a government blunder long before editor Tibbles sat down to interview Standing Bear. In 1868, the United States negotiated a treaty with the Sioux which granted that tribe 22 million acres in the Dakota Territory, including 96,000 acres that an earlier treaty had granted to the Poncas.[12] And since the Sioux were old enemies of the Poncas and were considerably more aggressive, the Poncas

found soon themselves in a dangerous situation: "penniless, homeless and surrounded by an overwhelming force of bitter enemies . . . , " as one historian put it.[13]

Having given the Ponca land to the Sioux, the government was not inclined to return it, because such a move might anger the Sioux and risk another Indian war. It was much easier to move the Poncas who were, after all, a small and cooperative band. So in 1877, the Indian Bureau forced the Poncas from their Dakota homes and sent them south.

The removal did not go well, however. To begin with, there was great resistance among the Poncas and the first removal party consisted of only a small portion of the tribe.[14] Unsatisfied with that result, the Indian Bureau redoubled its efforts and delivered an ultimatum: move voluntarily or move under force, but move. The Poncas went, enduring floods, storms and a series of illnesses on their way to present-day Oklahoma. It was a miserable journey and a number of Poncas died along the way.[15]

Ponca News in 1879: The Ponca troubles did not cease when the tribe arrived in Indian Territory. The Indian Bureau had no housing prepared for the immigrants and the land was damp and unhealthy for these Northern Indians. By the end of their second year in Indian Territory, 71 Poncas had died of malaria.[16] Standing Bear, who had lost several family members during the move, lost his only son to illness in 1878. Before he died, however, the younger man asked his father to bury him on their Dakota homeland. In early 1879, Standing Bear and several dozen other Poncas began the long walk home.

When the Indian Bureau learned of Standing Bear's journey, it dispatched soldiers to return the Poncas to Indian Territory. Thanks to Gen. Crook, word of their confinement and the order to return them to

Indian Territory reached the Omaha *Herald* and the Poncas soon became the objects of great attention. Tibbles was an ideal propagandist for the Poncas. Born in rural Ohio and raised in western Illinois, Tibbles had strong convictions and considerable public relations skill. As a young man, he was involved in anti-slavery hostilities in Kansas in 1856, spent three years at Mount Union College in Ohio and then served as a soldier and newspaper correspondent during the Civil War. As a minister in rural Missouri and Nebraska, he witnessed the devastation of the grasshopper invasion of 1874 and was active in efforts to relieve the suffering of prairie farmers and their families. It was the famine, in fact, which gave Tibbles the opportunity to test his public relations abilities and he traveled east to raise money for the needy. Although his efforts were derided by some Nebraska politicians and newspapers, Tibbles succeeded in collecting several thousand dollars to aid famine victims.[17]

By 1879, Tibbles had retired from the ministry and risen to assistant editor of the *Herald*, where he had numerous contacts with reform-minded Nebraskans. With Gen. Crook's cooperation, Tibbles helped organize a group of Omaha ministers and other Indian sympatherizers on behalf of the Poncas. The group engaged two prominent Nebraska lawyers who then proceeded to procure a writ of habeas corpus from the federal judge in Omaha. The case, known as *Standing Bear vs. Crook*, was a bold legal move and it paid off in late May, 1879. Judge Elmer Dundy ruled that the Poncas had a right to bring suit and he ordered the release of Standing Bear and his band. Perhaps more importantly, the lawsuit and Judge Dundy's decision focused new attention on the government's misdealings with the Poncas and added more fuel to the fires of Indian reform.

The first reports of the Ponca controversy in 1879 involved the army's apprehension of the runaway Indians. A New York *Times* dispatch from Omaha published March 31 reported the arrest of six Poncas who were attempting to return to Dakota. The story did not mention Standing Bear but gave the particulars of the arrests and noted that "two squaws" attempted to stab the arresting officer.

But the story also noted the woes of the travelers. "During their march they were forced to endure all kinds of hardship, and when they arrived at the reservation they were in extreme need."[18] The article paraphrased the comments of a Ponca named Long Runner who "said with vehemence that his people would die before they would return to Indian Territory." Despite this potentially sympathetic information, the headline in New York *Times* referred to "Hostile Poncas" and claimed, incorrectly, that they had been "Forced Back To The Indian Territory."[19]

A few days later another Omaha dispatch put the Ponca suffering in more dramatic terms. Ponca leaders, the story said, met recently with Gen. Crook: "Standing Bear and Buffalo Chips drew a dismal picture of their sufferings, wrongs, and misfortunes, and protested against being sent south . . . ." The Indians also "acknowledged that they must obey and go" back to Indian Territory, the *Times* reported. "They only asked that Gen. Crook furnish the money to bury those of their number who must die on the way to fatigue and unaccustomed heat." Finally, the report ended on an ominous note: "Five Poncas now here are already ill."[20]

These dispatches were routine news reports and were not overtly sympathetic to the Poncas. Yet both stories acknowledged the human suffering of the Indians and presented their hardships in terms which white readers could understand. The presentation of such facts in the

*Times* underscored the changing image of the Plains Indian in the press. In these reports, for example, the Poncas were not referred to as "savages." More significantly, they were portrayed as reasonable persons, willing to submit to government authority. They simply wanted to return to their homes. The Poncas suffered and died, these stories implied, not because they were barbarians, but because they had a fierce attachment to their homeland. Thus the Poncas, by virtue of their reasonable demeanor and their suffering, were beginning to transcend the stereotype of the Plains Indian and emerge in the press in a fuller, more human fashion.

The Ponca Trial: When the Ponca case went to trial in early May, the New York *Times* put the news on page one. The story, a dispatch from Omaha, portrayed the case as "very important" and ended by emphasizing its uniqueness: "This is said to be the first case of the kind ever brought before a United States court, and excites unusual interest."[21] The *Times* followed up the next day, publishing a one paragraph summary of the proceedings.

The Ponca trial did not make page one in the Chicago *Tribune*, but the paper was openly sympathetic to the tribe. "THE PONCAS," was the *Tribune's* main headline, but its secondary head was more revealing: "Probability that Justice May Be Done These Unhappy Savages."[22] Unlike the *Times*, the *Tribune* story provided some details about testimony given before Judge Dundy. W. W. Hamilton, for instance, a clerk at the trader's store on the Omaha Reservation, testified that the Poncas "had tried to break away from Indian habits, and follow the habits and pursuits of civilized whites." More significantly, the story contained a short summary of Standing Bear's remarks, including this touching quote: "My son . . . asked me when he was dying, to take him back and bury him [in Dakota

Territory], and I have his bones in a box with me now. I want to live there the rest of my life, and to be buried there." The story ended with a prediction that the Indians would carry the day, although this position was unsupported by any evidence in the story.

Four days later and well in advance of Judge Dundy's decision, the *Tribune* offered its own opinion of the Ponca case. The editorial opened by reviewing the history of the controversy and praising the tribe's advancement toward civilization. It also noted the tribe's obedience to the rule of law: "The order of the Government . . . was by no means cordially assented to, although its binding force was recognized by them. They went as they were told,--without trouble . . . ."[23]

The editorial painted a gripping picture of Ponca suffering during the move from Dakota to Indian Territory. While this information was specific and credible, the paper was less certain about other aspects of the Ponca controversy. Concerning the land in Indian Territory where the tribe had settled, the paper hedged: " [I]t is fair to suppose that the land left for the Poncas was of not much value."

The *Tribune* was more convincing in its discussion of the legal merits of the case. The paper argued that Indians who severed their ties with their tribe had been--and ought to continue to be--considered citizens of the United States. In support of this position, it raised a number of thorny issues about the government's relationship to the evolving "civilized savage":

> [The Government] claims that, under no circumstances, can Indian be other than wards of the nation. It is important that it be known when, if ever, does this wardship cease. Is the Indian, no matter how civilized he may be, never to become a free citizen? If permitted to

> acquire citizenship, what degree of civilization shall he possess in order to be free from the shackles of the Indian Bureau, and to feel that he has a right to acquire property, to make a home where it pleases him, and to raise and educate his children.[24]

The editorial ended by praising the civilized condition of the Poncas and criticizing the government for its mishandling of the matter. The *Tribune* also contrasted the treatment received by the Poncas with the treatment of more hostile tribes: "[T]he Government gives far more consideration to the caprices of savage tribes who make themselves feared than it does to the rights and necessities of those tribes who have for years striven to acquire the white man's habit of life."[25]

Other newspapers did not give the Ponca trial such sympathetic coverage. The New Orleans *Picayune*, for example, did not run an account of the trial in early May. The story was also absent from the pages of the *Rocky Mountain News*, a long-time foe of Indian rights. Nevertheless, the newspapers which did run the Ponca trial story added further credibility to the evolving theme of the Ponca controversy: the wronged Indians and a heartless Indian bureaucracy.

Explaining Judge Dundy's Decision: The Ponca victory in Omaha received considerable praise in the Eastern press. The New York *Tribune's* first editorial on the decision praised the Poncas, Judge Dundy and especially Tibbles for his role in bringing the case to court. Said the paper:

> The second century of the Republic is a late date to announce that any body of men born heirs to the soil, intelligent, moral, hard-working Christians, 'have the inalienable right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness as long as they obey the laws and do not trespass on forbidden ground.'[26]

The editorial ended with a call for government action: "How will the Government rectify its mistakes?" This question was addressed two weeks later by Tibbles himself. In a letter to the paper, he reviewed the wrongs inflicted upon Standing Bear and outlined plans for new legal action. Tibbles concluded with a plea for financial support: "I suppose you are well aware that lawsuits cost money . . . . To recover this land belonging to the tribe will cost at least $1,000 . . . . I write to ask you if readers of THE TRIBUNE cannot help me in this fight for the natural rights of man."[27] The *Tribune* did not comment on the letter, but its headline revealed the paper's bias: "T. H. Tibbles, The Nebraska Editor, Asks For Means To Continue The Fight Which He Has Bravely Begun."

The New York *Times* was much more reticent on the Ponca decision. Although the paper ran the news of Judge Dundy's decision on page one,[28] the *Times* waited three weeks to comment on the case. More significant than this delay, however, was the nature of the commentary: informed, rational and totally bland. The editorial opened with a reference to the "full text of the important opinion" and explained legal arguments on both sides in the case as well as the high points of the decision. The closest the *Times* came to offering its own opinion on the matter was the observation that "an appeal was promptly taken, it remains to be seen whether the Supreme Court of the United States will affirm or reverse the judgment of Judge Dundy."[29] No ringing endorsement here.

The Chicago *Tribune* used the Ponca decision as a platform for its ideas about the nature of the Indian and the government's role in Indian affairs. The paper built its case on the fact that many Indians, including the Poncas, had demonstrated their potential for civilization and therefore deserved legal protection. "Such Indians have laid aside their

savage instincts and customs, and they are now law-abiding, frugal, and industrious." What the government must do, the paper continued, is to make changes in the law which recognize this fact. "Means should be devised by which an Indian, when he has attained the necessary degree of civilization, shall be released from the arbitrary control of the Indian Bureau, and allowed all the rights and immunities of a free man."[30] The effect of such reasoning, however, was to reinforce the idea that Indians could be readily "civilized" through such simple means as adopting an agricultural lifestyle. Although this was a long-standing belief among many Indian bureaucrats and reformers, the process of becoming civilized was clearly a more difficult process. The *Tribune* and other newspapers, however, did little to challenge such ideas.

In any case, the outpouring of editorial support for the Poncas was genuine and well intentioned. The papers wanted justice for the Poncas and reforms in the Indian Bureau. Yet these were easy positions for the metropolitan newspapers to take; no Indians threatened their readers and the problems of the frontier were readily "solved" on paper. Moreover, the newspapers treated the Poncas as an exceptional case, a tribe easily distinguished from less civilized natives. The Chicago *Tribune*, for instance, enthusiastically supported the Poncas. But the language of the the paper's support provides some insight into why and how the Poncas gained editorial favor. In its May 6 editorial, the *Tribune* praised the tribe for its acquiesce to government authority; even in the face of forced removal, the tribe acknowledged the power--and superiority--of the U.S. government. In addition, both the May 6 editorial and another editorial published May 19 praised the Poncas for their progress toward civilization, progress which was, in reality, a test of their willingness to

give up their own ways and become as much like whites as possible. Indeed, the Poncas had adopted many ways of the whites. So it was easy for the Chicago *Tribune* and other reform-minded papers to praise the Poncas because they were nearly ideal Indians, at least from the white point of view. Other tribes--the Sioux, for example--were much harder to praise because they were still "savage" Indians, unwilling to be tamed and disrespectful of white authority. Viewed in this light, newspaper support for the Poncas seems more expedient than enlightened. Although the Chicago *Tribune* and other newspapers were sincere in their concern for the Poncas, their support for Indians tended to be confined to tribes most willing and able to give up their culture and "become" whites. Thus newspaper sympathy for the Poncas, like the concerns expressed by the humanitarians, promoted the idea of assimilation as the ultimate solution to the "Indian problem."

Assimilation was not a solution proposed by the *Rocky Mountain News*. The paper announced Judge Dundy's ruling in Washington dispatch which was more commentary than news. The story positioned the decision as a blow to the government, saying that it would disrupt the "present Indian system" and "prove extremely dangerous alike to whites and Indians upon their reservations."[31] The story went on to predict a worst-case scenario: "Under this decision it would seem that the Indians would become a body of tramps moving without restraint wherever they please and exposed to the attacks of frontiersmen without being able to secure any redress from government."[32]

The following day, the *News* offered a tongue-in-cheek endorsement of the Ponca ruling: "This decision of an Omaha judge that Indians are citizens is another grand triumph of great moral ideas. The more

barbarians as voters the more offices for demagogues and the more burdens of misrule for the people."[33] A day later, the paper offered a new opinion on the Indian situation, this one even more hostile than the last. "War with the Indians is cheaper than peace with them. Powder and shot makes a bad red man a quiet and inexpensive reminiscence. It would be cheaper to board them at first-class hotels, than it is to feed and protect them on reservations."[34] Although this commentary did not mention the Ponca decision, its timing suggests that the case generated new feelings of hostility toward Indians at the *Rocky Mountain News*.

The Truth about the Poncas: The attitudes expressed in Denver were not widespread, at least not in the East. But in the months following the Ponca decision, the news about the controversy began to come from two primary sources, each with an ax to grind. In Omaha, the Ponca sympathizers had been acutely aware of the need for national publicity from the start, with Tibbles sending telegrams to newspapers in New York, Chicago and other cities shortly after his first interview with the Indians.[35] Without their own correspondents in Omaha, these papers replied on information from the Ponca sympathizers for their news about controversy. Not surprisingly, much of the information emanating from Omaha emphasized the suffering of the Poncas at the hands of the Indian Bureau. The other side of the story came from the government sources in Washington and the most active newsmaker was Interior Secretary Carl Schurz. With easy access to the news columns of several major newspapers, Schurz vigorously defended the Indian Bureau and attempted justify and explain his position on the Poncas.

One of the papers which figured prominently in this debate was the New York *Times*. In mid-1879, for example, the *Times* published an

official report from the Indian Bureau which contradicted reports from Omaha about conditions at the Ponca Agency in Indian Territory. Indian Inspector John McNeil described the Ponca settlement in glowing terms: "Quite a town has grown up at the agency, having the most delightful situation of any in the whole Indian country."[36] He also noted that the government's disciplinary measures at the agency had been effective. Some wayward Indians, McNeil wrote, "have felt the power of the Government--that was lesson enough. They are now [Col. Whiteman's] best working hands." McNeil concluded by evaluating the morale of the Poncas. "The Indians are in good health and appear to have lost that morose and gloomy bearing they so uniformly exhibited last year. Work appears to have much the same effect upon the Indians as upon the white man in improving his health and his temper."[37] The *Times* published this report without editorial comment or any other explanation of its source. Yet it seems clear that the government's release of this official correspondence was intended to counter the negative image of Indian Territory described by Standing Bear and the runaway Poncas.

The dispute between Ponca supporters and Secretary Schurz became more public during the summer of 1879, when Tibbles resigned his position at the Omaha *Herald* in order work full-time for the Ponca cause. Tibbles traveled East to arrange a lecture tour for Standing Bear and an educated Omaha Indian woman named Susette La Flesche, also known as Bright Eyes. In Boston, Tibbles' message had great appeal and several prominent citizens organized an Indian reform committee. Among the principals on this committee was D. A. Goddard, editor of the Boston *Daily Advertiser*, whose paper gave Tibbles and the Ponca cause considerable attention.[38]

But Tibbles' activities did not sit well in Washington and Schurz responded to the allegations in two open letters published in the *Advertiser* in August.[39] Also published that month was a New York *Times* story which questioned both Tibbles' facts and his motives and went on to defend the current administration. Although the story was published as news and was not identified as the work of Schurz or his staff, it was heavily biased against Tibbles and supportive of the Indian Bureau. After attacking Tibbles and reviewing the Ponca situation, the article admitted that the Poncas had been mistreated. Concerning the government, the article emphasized the positive:

> Since 1877 everything possible has been done to promote the interests and welfare of the Poncas and if Mr. Tibbells [sic] knows of the existence of an Indian Ring, and will come here and indicate where it can be found to Secretary Schurz, he will accomplish more than by haranguing the people of Boston . . . ."[40]

This story was clearly more editorial than news and its origins in Washington suggest a partisan source. More importantly, this story, and stories like it, further obscured the facts surrounding the Poncas controversy by reducing their condition to a series of charges and counter-charges, the truth of which remained unknown and uninvestigated in the press.

The New York *Tribune* also got involved in the Ponca dispute in response to Tibbles' message. An August 11 editorial praised Tibbles as "the heroic Editor of Omaha, who forced Justice . . . to take off her bandage and deal fairly with Standing Bear." The Poncas, the paper said, were model Indians who had an indisputable right to their land. "They had been

confirmed in their ownership by three separate treaties. They had never been at war with the Government; never had once violated a treaty."[41]

According to the *Tribune*, the dispute was the result of a "few sharp dealers in Washington [who] wanted this property" and who conspired to drive the Poncas away and deprive them of their rights. The paper concluded by endorsing the Omaha court decision and advocating expanded rights for Indians. "Bring the red man under the protection of the courts and give him the ballot, and the problem is solved, and there will be an end of such wholesale rascally outrages as this of the Poncas has been."[42]

The newspaper's position was helpful to the Ponca cause, but it was not an entirely realistic assessment of the Ponca dilemma. In the first place, the paper glossed over the shortcomings of the Indians, saying only that they were "civilized; had farms, trades, good schools, churches which they built and supported." In the *Tribune's* telling, the Poncas were model citizens who had easily adopted the ways of the whites. Significantly, the *Tribune* did not have its own reporter covering the Poncas and offered no evidence for its judgments. The paper also oversimplified the effect of expanded Indian rights, which were, as the paper claimed, "a move in the right direction." But court protection and the right to vote was not the simple solution the newspaper implied; bureaucratic incompetence and corruption, racial discrimination and cultural readjustment would confront the Poncas for years to come.

A more informed assessment of the Poncas came from Secretary Schurz himself. In a statement released in Washington August 22 and published in the *Tribune* the following day, Schurz defended the government's actions in the Ponca case. Although he was hardly impartial, Schurz, unlike the *Tribune*, had first-hand reports from Ponca territory

and his statement cited evidence not found in other news reports. For example, Schurz questioned the tribe's self-sufficiency in agriculture as well as their degree of civilization. "While the Poncas have always been very good Indians, they were very far removed from a civilized condition," he wrote. "The fact is, they were regularly fed by the Government. They are gradually approaching a civilized condition now, but they are certainly nearer to it at present than they have ever been before."[43] Although Schurz was much less sympathetic toward the Poncas than the *Tribune*, the paper was even-handed enough to run his statement on page one. On the other hand, Schurz' statement put an official twist on the Ponca story which the newspaper was unable to challenge. In this way, the real truth about the Poncas, their progress toward of civilization, and their running dispute with Indian officials remained unclear.

The *Tribune's* defense of the Poncas did not go unchallenged from its readers either. At least one New Yorker was incensed enough over the issue to write a letter attacking the paper and the Indians. The letter challenged more than the Poncas' claim to citizenship or land; it challenged their very right to exist. The writer, identified only as "D. E. D.," opened with a few questions of the editor: "I would like to know what rights the Poncas or any other Indians have, or are entitled to?" Also this: "What right have they to be in the country, anyhow?"[44]

Without legal standing--or moral standing, for that matter--the Indians were defenseless:

> They are nothing but barbarians; they have no vote; while we are Christians and voters. Therefore, the land they occupy is unprofitable, and I for one cannot see why any white man who is a voter, and

> desires the land, should not make a claim to it, and if necessary, get help from the Government to obtain it.[45]

The letter claimed that the government's Indian policy was a sham, a round-about way of "killing them off by whiskey and starvation, and by employing agents, in the first place, to get them to run away, and soldiers, in the second place, to kill them under pretence of bringing them back." Finally, the writer ended with a call to patriotic values: "This is a glorious country--'the land of the free and the home of the brave'--where the oppressed of all nations may find a refuge, become naturalized and vote, providing they are white."[46]

Despite the outrageousness of the letter, the paper ran it without comment. Yet even as a racist diatribe, the letter followed a well established pattern of thinking about Indians. They were not Christians, hence they were "barbarians" and inferior by definition. They were not voters, another sign of their inferiority (though this was a Catch-22, of course, since they were not permitted to be citizens). Moreover, they occupied "unprofitable" land, an implication that the Indians were incapable of improving it. Finally they were not white, which by itself precluded their entering the land where "the oppressed of all nations" could find safe haven. In all these ways the Indians were separated from whites and assigned to a no-man's land of servitude and humiliation.

None of these ideas belonged to the *Tribune*. Yet the *Tribune* was not completely blameless in its portrayal of the Ponca case. The paper proudly supported the Poncas, but it did not effectively challenge the position of Secretary Schurz or biases of "D. E. D." More importantly, the *Tribune* did little to inform itself and its readers of the Poncas' true condition. Had it done so, the paper might have countered both Schurz and its critics with

direct evidence from the West, evidence which would have shed some needed light on their state of civilization and their mistreatment at the hands of the government. As it was, the paper could only assert what Tibbles and other Indian sympathizers said about the issue and then print the other side from Schurz and the Indian-haters. This made for a certain balance, but it did not lead to the truth. In sum, the true condition of the Poncas was beyond the journalistic grasp of one of the tribe's best editorial supporters, the New York *Tribune*.

**The Ponca Publicity Tour**

The war of words became even more intense when Tibbles, Standing Bear and Bright Eyes began their lecture tour in late 1879. Tibbles' advance work quickly began to pay off as the party traveled to Chicago, Boston and New York. "[E]verywhere they were received by crowded, enthusiastic houses of good folk who listened to the stories of their wrongs, were impressed by stage costumes and contributed liberally," one historian concluded.[47] The newspapers helped the cause too, publishing frequent reports on the speakers and the activities of their supporters. In New York, for example, the *Times* published a short report on a reception held for the Poncas and their supporters at a home on Fifth Avenue. The headline asked, "IS THE INDIAN A CITIZEN?" but the story was less about legal issues than about the tribe's troubled relationship with the government. The story also listed a number of prominent citizens who attended the reception, most of them New York clergymen.[48]

A few days later, the *Times* ran its account of the Ponca meeting in Steinway Hall, where a thousand people came out to see and hear the

Poncas. Standing Bear was described as "an athletic savage--if such a term can be applied to a very docile Indian . . . ." and Bright Eyes was "a little woman about 20 years of age . . . of tawny complexion, pleasant features, and has a very feminine voice and manner."[49] The reporter was obviously moved by their appeal: "The story told by these people of the incredible wrongs they have suffered was simple, plain, and pathetic almost beyond the power of description."

Several speakers addressed the crowd: the Rev. Henry W. Bellows, Tibbles, Bright Eyes and Prof. Roswell D. Hitchcock. Bright Eyes, the paper said, "was listened to with great apparent interest." So great were the Ponca sufferings, she said, that, sometimes, she almost lost her faith in God and in justice. It crushed her, she said, "to see a little handful of poor, helpless, peaceable people oppressed by a mighty nation."

Bright Eyes also did her part to show Indians as human beings, something that was frequently lacking in newspaper reports from the frontier. "She assured her hearers that the Indians were human beings like themselves, with hopes and affections like themselves, who loved and hated as they did," the *Times* reported.[50]

The evening ended with a speech by Prof. Hitchcock who endorsed the idea of the Indian as a human being and pointed out that public opinion about Indians was constantly swinging from one extreme to the other. "We used to have in our books an ideal Indian--Logan, for example, in the speech which Thomas Jefferson put into his mouth, and King Philip, as described by Washington Irving," said Hitchcock. "Latterly we had heard that the only good Indian was a dead Indian. The pendulum had traversed its arc. The truth lies between these two extremes, one of which was sentimental, the other brutal, or worse than brutal." The Indian question,

Hitchcock said, was really a moral question, "not to be settled at once, but slowly, as all moral questions have to be settled; not to-day, perhaps, nor to-morrow, but some time, and settled rightly."[51] Here, at last, was a realistic--if abstract--assessment of the image problem confronting American Indians. Unlike most other Indian sympathizers, including those in the press, Hitchcock was willing to admit that the Poncas were neither perfect Indians nor savage brutes but somewhere between these extremes. And Hitchcock, unlike the editorial writers, could see that equality and justice for Indians was a long-term goal which could not be achieved simply through court decisions and executive fiat.

Hitchcock's ideas, however, did not capture the imagination of the press or the public. That role fell to Bright Eyes, who, unlike Standing Bear, could speak English fluently and who knew how to dramatize and embellish her speeches for maximum effect. The number of families decimated in Indian Territory increased from sixteen to twenty-four in Bright Eyes' testimony, and a group of Ponca chiefs stranded by the Indian Bureau in 1877 had to travel, first, 500 miles to their homes, then one thousand, and later twelve hundred.[52] More significantly, Bright Eyes was an attractive and charming presence on stage, a fact which soon affected her public image. After her speech at Steinway Hall, for example, the *Times* reporter noted, "The audience gathered about the Indian girl . . . to talk with her and shake her by the hand."[53] Notably, no such comment was made about Standing Bear who was, by contrast, much more "Indian" than Bright Eyes. The press also contributed to Bright Eyes' image. According to her biographer, she wanted to be known by her formal name, Susette La Flesche, but "the newspapers would not let her."[54]

Bright Eyes' fame in the East soon had concrete consequences. She was particularly popular in Boston, where she met Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, the author of *Hiawatha*. According to one account of their meeting, "The poet clasped her hand with both of his own, looked down into her eyes and after an appreciable pause, said, 'This is Minnehaha.'"[55] So began a rumor that Bright Eyes was the model for Longfellow's fictional Indian heroine, a rumor which further idealized the public image of Bright Eyes. Such sentimental notions probably helped the Ponca cause, but they did not promote an realistic view of Indians or the long-term problems they faced in the West.

Converting Mrs. Jackson: A more important consequence of Bright Eyes' fame was her influence on Helen Hunt Jackson, a New England writer then living in Colorado. Mrs. Jackson, daughter of an Amherst professor and a childhood friend of Emily Dickinson, wrote sentimental verses and travel pieces for a variety of newspapers and magazines, including the New York *Evening Post*, the New York *Independent*, *Atlantic Monthly*, *Riverside Magazine for Young People*, *Woman's Journal*, and the *Christian Union*.[56] In early 1879, Mrs. Jackson was restless and depressed, having lost her zeal for Colorado and feeling cut off from her literary friends in the East. Bright Eyes and the Poncas soon changed all that. Returning to Boston in November 1879 for a celebration in honor of Oliver Wendell Holmes' seventieth birthday, Mrs. Jackson heard the Ponca delegation speak and was immediately attracted to their cause. In fact, the treatment (or mistreatment) of Indians became a consuming passion for Mrs. Jackson for the rest of her life and resulted in her two best-known and most influencial works, *A Century of Dishonor*, a history of Indian-white relations, and *Ramona*, a romantic novel about the California Mission

Indians. This conversion to the Indian cause was all the more remarkable because of Mrs. Jackson's previous antipathy toward abolition, temperance, suffrage and other reform movements. Prior to her Ponca encounter in Boston, she had displayed no interest in Indians, describing those she had met on her travels as "loathsome" and "hideous."[57] But the Ponca story had a powerful effect on Mrs. Jackson. According to Bright Eyes' biographer, Mrs. Jackson told the younger woman, "My dear, you have given me a new purpose in life. You and I will work miracles together. You will see."[58] Indeed, for the next several months, Mrs. Jackson "gave her entire mind, strength, heart and soul to the Indian cause."[59] One of her first acts was to start an acrimonious and very public debate with Secretary Schurz. In December 1879, under her pseudonym "H. H.," she composed a long attack on the government's Indian policy which the New York *Tribune* published alongside a report on the most recent lecture by Tibbles, Bright Eyes and company. Mrs. Jackson did not confine herself to the Poncas, but detailed the troubles of a number of Western tribes, including the Omahas (Bright Eyes' own tribe), the Nez Perce, the White River Utes. About the latter tribe, Mrs. Jackson quoted Schurz' annual report that the tribe had "no just cause for complaint." Her next sentence quoted another official report which said, "The situation of the White River Ute Agency is the worst possible in all respects, unless it should be the intention to keep the Indians as National paupers."[60]

Secretary Schurz replied in the *Tribune* four days later. He answered "H. H." point by point, attacking her positions as incomplete and based on erroneous information. Concerning the Poncas, Schurz repeated his argument that the blame belonged to the previous administration and that he and his staff were the ones who had exposed the situation in the first

place. As for the Poncas' legal position, Schurz said he doubted their chances in the Supreme Court but was heartily in favor of new legislation which would enact the principles of Judge Dundy's decision.[61]

This answer did not satisfy Mrs. Jackson, whose reply to Schurz' reply appeared a few days later. In this article, Mrs. Jackson launched her own point-by-point rebuttal of Schurz' statements. She disputed the secretary's claim that he and the Indian Commissioner "were the first persons to bring the wrongs inflicted upon the Poncas to public notice." Somewhat grudgingly, Mrs. Jackson admitted that they were "among the first," but credited Tibbles and the Omaha lawyers with the real discovery.[62]

In early 1880, Mrs. Jackson's outspoken support for Indian reform started another newspaper debate, this one involving the former editor of the *Rocky M ntain News*, William Byers. Byers had little use for Indians, especially those who interfered with the development of his beloved Colorado. In a defense of the Colorado Utes, Mrs. Jackson, an adopted resident of that state, included a commentary on the Sand Creek massacre and the role of the *News*. "When this Colorado regiment of demons returned to Denver they were greeted with an ovation. *The Denver News* said: 'All acquitted themselves well.'" She went on to quote portions of the investigation which revealed the atrocities committed by the Colorado soldiers and then compared those misdeeds with the ones currently being used against the Utes. "Shall we sit still, warm and well fed, in our homes, while five hundred women and little children are being slowly starved in the bleak, barren wilderness of Colorado?" she asked.[63]

In response, Byers charged that Mrs. Jackson had "arraigned the people of Colorado as a community of barbarians . . . ." As for Sand Creek, Byers

was unrepentant. The investigation into the massacre, he said, "was made for certain selfish purposes." And as for the crimes committed by the soldiers, it was, he claimed, only a natural response to the what they found in the Sand Creek camp:

> There was an Indian saddle over the pommel of which was stretched skin stripped from the body of a white woman. Is it any wonder that soldiers, flushed with victory . . . should indulge--some of them--in unwarranted atrocities after finding such evidence of barbarism . . . .[64]

Had she been in Colorado before Sand Creek, when the entire territory was threatened by Indian violence, Byers said, "H. H." would have realized the necessity of that battle. "Sand Creek saved Colorado, and taught the Indians the most salutary lesson they had ever learned." The White River Utes, Byers added, deserved their fate because of recent massacres.

Byers' letter was answered by Mrs. Jackson, who was followed again by Byers.[65] Like the dispute with Schurz, however, this debate shed more heat than light on the problems of Indians in the West. In her public letters and in *A Century of Dishonor*, Mrs. Jackson helped inflame passions about the injustices done to the Indians, but she did not address the long-standing problems of the Western tribes in specific and useful ways. Mrs. Jackson's strength was identifying problems, not developing workable solutions. And despite her acquaintance with the Poncas and the inspiration of Bright Eyes, Mrs. Jackson did not have a deep understanding of Indians or a first-hand knowledge their problems. Most of the information in *A Century of Dishonor*, in fact, came not from interviews with Indians or from her observations in the West, but from research at the Astor Library in New York.[66]

For their part, Schurz and Byers showed that there were at least two sides to the Indian issue and that the problems in the West were not necessarily subject to simple solutions. In any case, these debates were helpful to the Indian cause--and ultimately the national cause--because they helped keep the Indian problem on the public agenda in the early 1880s. Unfortunately, they sometimes obscured the real needs of Indians by focusing on matters such as who first discovered the Poncas' problems.

The *Tribune,* meanwhile, used its editorial columns to sort out the charges and look for answers. Thanks to the Ponca lecture tour, the paper had developed strong opinions about this issue. So when Congressional hearings on the matter began in early 1880, the *Tribune's* editorial expressed no doubts; the headline was, "A QUESTION EASILY SETTLED" and the piece opened, "There is no need of prolonged discussion or argument in the case of the Poncas . . . ." After a quick review of the facts, the paper claimed that the Ponca removal "was as tyrannical and brutal an outrage as the banishment of any Russian subject to Siberia." The solution, then, was simple: "There is the land; there are the men who own it. Send them back to it. Then let us promptly see to it that such outrages are made impossible for the future."[67]

Unfortunately, such solutions were too simple, which, to its credit, the *Tribune* soon recognized. In another editorial in early 1880, the paper attempted to address the confusion and misinformation surrounding the Indian debate.

> So many statements and counter-statements about the Indians fill the papers just now that the average reader is likely to thrust aside the whole matter in disgust. He would like to know the truth and deal justly. But what is the truth? How is he to be just?[68]

These were important questions and the *Tribune* attempted to answer them with three proposals. First, the paper examined Ponca controversy and cited the need in that case for legal protection for Indians. "So long as the Indians remain without the protection of the law, we give the lie to our claim to be a Republic as much as we did when we permitted slavery," the paper said.

Second, the *Tribune* addressed the problem of the "Utes and other semi-civilized tribes." Here the problem was more difficult, because whites trespassed on Indian lands and the Indians murdered in response. The paper urged Secretary Schurz to make immediate amends with the Utes by granting them "their land in fee simple,--or sufficient land for all their needs,--making it inalienable for a generation." In addition, the paper urged immediate assimilation: "Let them have the chance they crave of education in books, in the trades and farming; recognize them in law, and then, if they deserve it, put them in jail and hang them."[69]

Finally, the paper acknowledged the power of the Indian reform movement and its efforts to advance the Indian from the primitive state through education, religion, and agriculture. "There is no doubt of the ultimate success of this movement. The justice and religious sense of the people is fully awakened."

These were worthy arguments, well meaning and certainly sensitive to the Indian cause. But they were also naive, especially in the case of the Utes, where the paper assumed that legal protection would keep Colorado settlers away from highly desirable lands and that education and agriculture would easily put the Utes to the same level as whites. And although the paper was correct in its assessment of the growing power of

the Indian reform movement, it adopted the movement's ideas uncritically and failed to foresee the problems caused by the reformers themselves.

Nevertheless, the reform spirit generated by the Poncas and their supporters blossomed with the new decade. In 1881, for example, the *Tribune* reviewed Mrs. Jackson's *A Century of Dishonor.* Not surprisingly, the book was well received at the *Tribune*, although the unidentified reviewer noted the disjointed structure of the book as well as its one-sided approach to the problem of Indian-government relations. The review repeated some of book's homilies, such as advice from Julius Seelye, president of Amherst College, who declared in the book's "Introduction" that "the only solution of the Indian problem involves the entire change of these people from a savage life to a civilized life." More critically, the reviewer pointed out that, contrary to Mrs. Jackson's thesis, the government had

> in many instances behaved with great generosity, and is now feeding, clothing and paying annuities to thousands of savages who will not work for a living; . . . that if the treaties with the Indians had been strictly observed all the country west of the Alleghenies would to-day be a howling wilderness; that the Indian as a rule is an ugly and vicious creature, who only behaves himself when he is afraid to rob and scalp
> his white neighbors.[70]

All this might be said, the reviewer continued, but "it would not excuse the folly and injustice than has in many instances characterized our dealings as a nation with the aboriginal tribes." Finally the reviewer summed up the book's message as "[l]ess force and more kindness, less shooting and more teaching . . . ." and concluded that though Mrs. Jackson's

method was faulty, her motive was worthy. Here, at least, the *Tribune* recognized that the Indian reformers did not have all the answers.

**Conclusion**

On its own terms, the Ponca publicity campaign was a public relations success. The efforts of Thomas Tibbles, Bright Eyes, Helen Hunt Jackson and others improved the image of the Indian in the press and helped move the Congress and the public toward a more enlightened view of the natives. As a result of the Poncas, the press and the public were not so quick to condemn all Indians as savages and barbarians, a significant improvement over the stereotypical image of Indians in America. Moreover, the Ponca campaign helped promote reform-minded legislation which conferred new rights on the Indians and promised to speed their assimilation into mainstream society.

The Dawes Act, passed by Congress in 1887, was the culmination of the nineteenth century Indian reform movement. The bill granted individual Indians tracts of land on which they could grow crops and raise cattle and, in time, become ordinary U.S. citizens. Although the legislation had roots far back in the Indian reform movement, the Ponca controversy of 1879-80 was one of the more immediate sources of the Dawes Act because it focused so dramatically on the mistakes of the Indian Bureau and the virtues of the Ponca tribe. With publicity-minded reformers leading the way, the newspapers became a major part of the Ponca campaign and promoters of the Indian reform movement. Without sympathetic news coverage and supporting editorials, in fact, opposition to Ponca removal

and support for Indian reform could not have attained the level of public attention that it did.

Unfortunately for the Indians, the Dawes Act also undermined the tribal structure of the Indians, a move which seriously eroded the strength of their culture. Moreover, reservation land not distributed to Indians soon passed into the hands of whites, as did many of the parcels originally assigned to Indians. The Dawes Act, despite its humanitarian aims, was a disaster for American Indians.[71]

As it turned out, the Ponca publicity campaign did not help American Indians significantly in the long term. The Poncas, for one thing, were almost too easy to support. They were a peaceful people with a history of friendly relations with whites. In addition, they had been clearly wronged by the Indian Bureau. As a result, it did not take much editorial courage to support the Poncas or to urge, from the safety of the East, reforms for the Western tribes. In short, the Poncas were an exceptional case, not subject to the usual news stereotypes about Indians. Indeed, the Sioux, the Utes and other hostile tribes continued to make news in sensational--and often exaggerated--reports from the West during the 1880s.[72]

In addition, press coverage of the Ponca affair was less the result of journalistic enterprise than of the activists on both sides. The newspapers took up the Ponca cause, but only after the story was promoted by Tibbles, who combined journalistic talent with moral indignation and the amplifying power of the telegraph to get the story into several important Eastern papers. Tibbles then kept the story alive by organizing the Ponca lecture tour, where the story took on a life of its own. The key figure in this public relations success was Bright Eyes, who charmed both the public and the press in support of the Ponca cause.

Although Bright Eyes and Standing Bear were hardly neutral parties in the debate, the publication of their speeches was a strength of the publicity campaign because it represented one of the few opportunities for Indians themselves to address Indian issues in a sustained and serious way.

The newspapers, unfortunately, never went far beyond this point. Although Carl Schurz and others presented the government's side of the issue, the deeper problems of the Poncas and other tribes remained largely unexamined. Because the press was dependent on various partisans for its information, many issues of the Indian reform movement were never discussed or critically examined. No paper examined during this period, in fact, published a first-hand report on the condition or status of the Poncas in the West. By failing to investigate the story fully, the papers contributed to the superficial nature of the Indian debate during this period. Had modern PR techniques been available to Tibbles and other reformers, the newspapers might have been induced to look more critically at Indian policies, a move which might have prevented the worse mistakes of the Dawes Act.

But as it happened, the newspapers easily accepted the ideas of the reformers. The humanitarians assumed that education, religious instruction and a plot of land on which to farm would soon lead the Indians into the mainstream of American life. Such hopes were naive and premised on a host of doubtful assumptions about Indian life and culture, not to mention the intentions of land-hungry Western settlers. In any case, these assumptions were not challenged in either the reporting or the editorial analysis of the Ponca controversy. The result was a reform movement which failed to recognize the dangers of the Dawes Act until years later, when the damage was already done.

## Endnotes

[1] Thomas Henry Tibbles, *Buckskin and Blanket Days*, Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday & Co., 1957, pp. 193-195.

[2] Ibid. Also see Thomas Henry Tibbles, *The Poncas Chiefs*, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1972 (orig. pub. 1880), pp. 18-19.

[3] Saint Paul *Daily Press*, April 15, 1873, quoted in Henry E. Fritz, *The Movement for Indian Assimilation, 1860-1890*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1963, p. 171.

[4] Ibid., pp. 171-178.

[5] Quoted in Robert G. Athern, *William Tecumseh Sherman and the Settlement of the West*, Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1956, p. 118. Also see, Roger L. Nichols, "Printer's Ink and Red Skins" Western Newspapermen and the Indians," *Kansas Quarterly* 3:4, Fall 1971, pp. 82-88.

[6] *Daily Rocky Mountain News*, March 2, 1880, p. 4.

[7] Washington *Post*, Nov. 8, Nov. 12, and Nov. 19, 1877, all p. 1.

[8] Ibid., Nov. 17, 1877, p. 1.

[9] Ibid., Nov. 19, 1877, p. 1.

[10] Quoted in Frederick E. Hoxie, *A Final Promise: The Campaign to Assimilate the Indians, 1880-1920*, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984, p. 6.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Robert Winston Mardock, *The Reformers and the American Indian*, Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1971, p. 169. For additional background, correspondence and other documents related to the government's role in the Ponca controversy, see *Senate Reports*, 46th Cong, 2d Sess., Vol. VI, No. 670, May 31, 1880.

[13] Earl W. Hayter, "The Ponca Removal," *North Dakota Historical Review* 6:4, July 1932, p. 266.

[14] Fritz, op. cit., p. 189.

[15] The journey is dramatically described in Dee Brown, *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee*, New York: Bantam Books, pp. 338-340. Also see Hayter, pp. 268-269.

[16] Hayter, p. 271.

[17] Tibbles' own account of his life is in his autobiography, *Buckskin and Blanket Days*, op. cit. Also see the "Publisher's Preface" to the autobiography for additional biographical details on Tibbles.

[18] New York *Times*, March 31, 1879, p. 1.

[19] Ibid.

[20] Ibid., April 2, 1879, p. 5.

[21] New York *Times*, May 2, 1879, p. 1.

[22] Chicago *Tribune*, May 2, 1879, p. 3.

[23] Ibid., May 6, 1879, p. 4.

[24] Ibid.

[25] Ibid.

[26] Ibid., May 16, 1879, p. 4.

[27] Ibid., May 31, 1879, p. 3.

[28] New York *Times*, May 14, 1879, p. 1.

[29] Ibid., June 6, 1879, p. 4.

[30] Chicago *Tribune*, May 19, 1879, p. 4.

[31] *Daily Rocky Mountain News*, May 15, 1879, p. 1.

[32] Ibid.

[33] Ibid., May 16, 1879, p. 2.

[34] Ibid., May 17, 1879, p. 2.

[35] Tibbles, op. cit., pp. 32- 33.

[36] New York *Times*, July 3, 1879, p. 5.

[37] Ibid.

[38] Stanley Clark, "Ponca Publicity," *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 29:2, March 1943, pp. 500-502.

[39] Ibid.

[40] New York *Times*, August 3, 1879, p. 3.

[41] New York *Tribune*, August 11, 1879, p. 4.

[42] Ibid.

[43] Ibid., Aug. 23, 1879, p. 1.

[44] Ibid., p. 3

[45] Ibid.

[46] Ibid.

[47] Clark, op. cit, p. 505.

[48] New York *Times*, Dec. 9, 1879, p. 2.

[49] Ibid., Dec. 13, 1879, p. 2.

[50] Ibid.

[51] Ibid.

[52] Clark, p. 505.

[53] New York *Times*, Dec. 13, 1879, p. 2.

[54] Dorothy Clarke Wilson, *Bright Eyes*, New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1974, p. 217.

[55] Clark, p. 507. Also see Wilson, p. 235, and the New York *Tribune*, Dec. 8, 1879, p. 1, which repeated the Minnehaha story.

[56] Ruth Odell, *Helen Hunt Jackson*, New York: D. Appleton-Century Co., 1939. See Chapter 1 and Odell's bibliography of her work, pp. 249-314.

[57] Ibid., p. 155.

[58] Wilson, p. 233.

[59] Odell, p. 164.

[60] New York *Tribune*, Dec. 15, 1879, p. 5.

[61] Ibid., Dec. 19, 1879, p. 5.

[62] Ibid., Dec. 28, 1879, p. 5.

[63] Ibid., Feb. 5, 1880, p. 5.

[64] Ibid., Feb. 22, 1880, p. 6. Notably, the white woman's skin was not mentioned in the accounts of the Sand Creek fight published in the *Rocky Mountain News* in December 1864 and early 1865.

[65] Ibid., Feb. 24, p. 2; Feb. 27, p. 5, 1879.

[66] Rosemary Whitaker, *Helen Hunt Jackson*, Boise, Idaho: Boise State University Western Writers Series, No. 78, 1987, p. 26. Also see Andrew F. Rolle, "Introduction to the Torchbook edition," *A Century of Dishonor*, New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1965, p. xi.

[67] Ibid., Feb. 15, 1879, p. 6.

[68] Ibid., Feb. 29, 1880, p. 6.

[69] Ibid.

[70] Ibid., Feb. 4, 1881, p. 6.

[71] For details on the effects of the Dawes Act, see Fritz, op. cit., pp. 212-221. Also Brian W. Dippie, *The Vanishing American*, Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1982, pp. 174-175 and Hoxie, op. cit., p. 44.

[72] Exaggerated Western news reports continued after the Ponca story ceased to make news. See, for example, reports from the New York *Herald* in 1882 cited by Loring B. Priest, *Uncle Sam's Stepchildren*. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1942, p. 91.